

Joy in Affliction

"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."
I Thessalonians 1:6

This verse suggests **two evidences** that God has chosen a person: 1) - They received the message in the midst of persecution. 2) - The response to the message was a changed life; they became followers or mimics of Christ, and of the apostles. **The degree to which the believer is allowed to participate in the sufferings of Christ should be the measure of his joy.** This is the only form of suffering experienced in life that the believer can understand and explain (as did Paul in telling others why he suffered). Nevertheless, **nothing is more unnatural than for a person to rejoice in suffering.** It is supernatural. It is one of the great attestations to God working in a person.

There are three possible reasons why a person endures affliction: 1) - Someone or something is torturing him, as when a person is badly burned; 2) - He does not want to pay the price of escaping from their affliction, as when a noble man refuses to reveal the whereabouts of his wife to those wishing to harm her; 3) - He has an eschatological hope, as when people believe they gain eternally by accepting temporal persecution. **Affliction with joy is an anomaly in the non-Christian world.** Could it be that our Christian lives lack joy because following Christ costs so little?

Someone once said, "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them. They must, they have no other models." In an environment where people are hostile to the message of the Gospel, they may refuse to hear you when you speak, but **they cannot avoid learning from you when you face affliction with joy.**